

The
Melville Society
N E W S L E T T E R

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It is a real pleasure to announce that the papers delivered orally at the principal *Moby-Dick* centennial celebrations held in various parts of the country during the autumn of 1951 have been collected and will be published this year by the Southern Methodist University Press. According to Allen Maxwell, director of the Press, publication has been scheduled for late fall. The volume, now being designed, will be cloth-bound and will contain, besides an introduction, essays by Henry A. Murray, Tyrus Hillway, Walter E. Beazanson, Henry Nash Smith, Ernest E. Leisy, Hugh W. Hetherington, Perry Miller, Randall Stewart, and Wilson L. Heflin. The price has not yet been set but will probably be around four dollars.

An editorial committee, consisting of Tyrus Hillway and Luther S. Mansfield, has been collecting the essays and preparing the manuscript for over a year. William H. Gilman, who had originally planned to serve as one of the editors, found it necessary to ask that he be excused from serving. The Southern Methodist University Press was approached because of its excellent work on several recent books and because it showed signs of interest in publications in American literature. Readers at the Press have expressed much enthusiasm for the manuscript, and it is hoped that a most interesting volume will be issued. Tentative title: *Moby-Dick Centennial Essays*.

ON ENCYCLOPEDIAS

For a number of years frequent complaints have been directed at the editors of the standard encyclopedias regarding the inaccuracies in their Melville biographies. In spite of much new information which is constantly being turned up, these presumably careful compendiums of accurate knowledge continue to include year after year statements about Melville's life and works which are no longer regarded as true.

The *Encyclopedia Americana* seems to be the first work of this type to announce a complete revision of its biography of Melville. In the forthcoming edition, due this fall, the amount of space allotted to Melville will be increased from half a column to a full column. The new biography, together with articles on *Moby-Dick*, *Typee*, and *Omoo*, has been prepared by Tyrus Hillway. Efforts to per-

suade the editors of other standard reference works to accomplish a similar revision of the Melville materials have thus far proved unavailing. The *Americana*, therefore, bids fair to be the only important encyclopedia containing an accurate account of the facts of Melville's life as we now know them.

GIFT TO MELVILLE ROOM

Members of the executive committee agreed that, besides having an official representative of the Society (Luther Mansfield) at the ceremonies dedicating the new Herman Melville Memorial Room of the Berkshire Athenaeum, the Society should offer some gift as a token of its interest in and appreciation for this growing depository of Melville materials. Upon instructions from the committee, the secretary sent in behalf of the Society a package containing 48 items from the Society's files. The gift consisted chiefly of offprints and other published works of our members which have been accumulating over a period of seven or eight years. It was made possible by the kindness of members in sending copies of their articles and books to the secretary at the time of publication.

As older members will recall, the establishment of a Melville Room as a service to scholars constituted one of the original purposes for which the Society was founded. The room at Pittsfield, situated near the scenes of two important periods of Melville's life and not far from the other two great depositories of Melville materials, appears to fulfill the purpose which our founders had in mind. The collection, however, will need considerable strengthening, and members are urged to send copies of their future articles, books, and monographs to the new Melville Room as a contribution to scholarly studies.

The room was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies on April 24. Its collection includes both published works and memorabilia. All Melville students are invited to use its resources.

NOTES

A new edition of *White-Jacket* has been published in the Chiltern Library of the Grove Press (New York, 1953). \$3.00.

Melville is one of the authors discussed by Herbert Read in the revised edition of his *English Prose Style* (original edition published in 1928), which has been issued by Pantheon Books (New York, 1953). \$3.50.

When *Moby-Dick* was first added to the World's Classics series (Oxford University Press) in 1921, its reception proved so great that five reprintings occurred by 1925, ten by 1946. The text has now been reset and a new edition issued in the same series. \$1.25.

The Imperial Furniture Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan, manufactures for literary people an Emerson lamp commode (No. 3316) at \$69.75 and a Melville lamp commode with leather top (No. 3317) at \$79.50.

According to Hollywood sources, Gregory Peck has been chosen to play the part of Captain Ahab in the forthcoming motion picture version of *Moby-Dick* which John Huston has decided to produce and direct for Warner Brothers. This will be the first production of the story since Barrymore. Huston has written the new screenplay himself, and he plans to photograph all scenes by the so-called "three-dimensional" technique and with stereophonic sound.

Whale steaks made up the main course at a dinner given in Pittsfield in connection with the dedication of the Melville Room. It was in honor of Henry A. Murray, who donated his extensive personal collection of Melville items to the Berkshire Athenaeum for the new depository.

An interesting summary of current Melville scholarship for the benefit of French readers recently appeared in *Etudes Anglaises* (Paris). Full reference: Jean Simon, "Travaux Recents sur Herman Melville," *Etudes Anglaises*, VI, 41-49 (February, 1953).

Billy Budd in dramatic form continues to maintain its popularity with collegiate actors. The Coxe-Chapman ver-

sion was presented by student players in the Josiah Royce auditorium of the University of California at Los Angeles on May 27-30. The printed program contains a brief discussion of the plot by Leon Howard.

The Harvard University Press will publish this fall a new book by Eleanor Melville Metcalf, reportedly containing many family reminiscences. It will also have a number of illustrations, some of them not previously published. Its title will be *Herman Melville: Cycle and Epicycle*.

All except one of the papers read at our Cambridge meeting in December have now been turned in to the secretary. As soon as the final paper is in, the entire series will be duplicated for distribution to our active members.

Make plans now to attend the annual meeting of the Society in Chicago at the end of December. As usual, a meeting will be planned in connection with the annual convention of the Modern Language Association of America.

HEMINGWAY ON MELVILLE

"We have had writers of rhetoric who had the good fortune to find a little, in a chronicle of another man and from voyaging, of how things, actual things, can be, whales for instance, and this knowledge is wrapped in the rhetoric like plums in a pudding. Occasionally it is there, alone, unwrapped in pudding, and it is good. This is Melville. But the people who praise it, praise it for the rhetoric which is not important. They put a mystery in which is not there." — from Ernest Hemingway, *Green Hills of Africa* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), Ch. I.

AHAB AT NANTUCKET

Captain Ahab, the three-act play by Tyrus Hillway based on *Moby-Dick*, has been scheduled for production in the Straight Wharf Theater at Nantucket, August 3-15. Vincent Y. Bowditch will produce and direct the play. Russell Gold has been selected to play the title role. If successful, the play will be given at Nantucket each summer. Plans for a Broadway production are being considered.

THE *Melville Society* NEWSLETTER
IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE
Melville Society, a group of literary scholars and others interested
in the life and works of Herman Melville. The Society seeks to
facilitate the exchange of information among its members, to
stimulate the study of Melville's life and works, and to encourage
literary, historical, and bibliographical research. Executive com-
mittee: Merton M. Sealts (1954), president; Eleanor Melville
Metcalf (1953); William H. Gilman (1955); Walter E. Bezan-
son (1956); Harrison Hayford (1957). Membership is two
dollars per year and includes all services of the Society. Associate
membership (non-voting) is one dollar per year and includes
all issues of the Newsletter. Address Tyrus Hillway, secretary, at
Colorado State College, Greeley, Colorado.